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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the importance of a policy-guided administration. Policies enable an educational institution to attain credibility and continuity and to achieve its objectives. The principal's role as educational leader and executive officer is to help the board to identify policy needs and to monitor and evaluate programs. Policy-making is basically the board's prerogative. Every board of education has four responsibilities: (1) to establish the objectives of the school, (2) to determine policies, (3) to review decisions made by the administrative staff, and (4) to evaluate policy decisions. (Author/LD)

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1. The school administrator: a person of principle.

Every successful school administrator tries to act on the basis of principle and not merely in terms of situational impulse or intuition. It is true that every principal has his or her own style of administration which reflects his or her own personal value system, his or her own perception of human nature and conduct. However no matter how personal one's effectiveness in terms of clients (the students), one's colleagues (the faculty), and one's publics (parents, parishioners and the community at large) will depend on one's having recourse to principles which are shared with significant others, i.e. policies which are wisely and representatively conceived and visibly operative.

The effective operation of any organization requires an administration based on policy. The policies of an organization are guidelines for administrative action consistent with the goals and objectives of the organization and with each other.

The principal and the faculty work most effectively when their activities are goal-oriented, focused on objectives, and policy-guided. This applies first to the administrator, then to the teacher. Good administrative theory holds that employees who are not goal-oriented but rather are other-dependent and other-directed are in the long run not as efficient nor as effective as those who identify meaningfully with the organizational goals which are shared and known. This is especially true of an educational organization and of the educational community in which and in whose behalf it operates.

Student behavior is likewise affected by the administrative style of the principal. If administrative decisions and rule-making are based on principle made manifest through policy, they will have a consistency, a predictability and a fairness which will not escape the notice of students.

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Parents, parishioners, and the school's other publics likewise appreciate an administration that is visible and credible in terms of policies which enable the institution to achieve its objectives.

Every school administrator is him or herself something of an institution, i.e., he or she is a personal, living, sensitive extension of the institution which he or she administers.

To the extent that a school or a school system is operated not in terms of established policies but rather in terms merely of the administrator's personal value system, to that extent the educational institution will lack credibility and a continuity of effect beyond the term of any particular administration.

Another benefit of policy-guided administration should be felt by the administrator him or herself, who knowing that his or her every day decisions, the rules he or she makes and unmakes, are shared with others; are not arbitrary, individual acts, but a discreet combination of corporate wisdom and personal judgment. This, I should think, ought to be a source of satisfaction and an important ingredient for the mental health of any school administrator.

Historically, and constitutionally, policy-making in Catholic schools has been the prerogative of bishops, pastors and administrative superiors. All this is changing thanks to the Constitution on the Church and other influences emanating from Vatican II, to the American Bishops' publication TO TEACH AS JESUS DID, and to a greater awareness of good administrative theory. Which leads us into the subject of the principal and the board.

2. Policy-making is basically the board's prerogative.

Having indicated the important, even essential, connection between policy and administration, I would like next to show why policy is basically the prerogative of

the board, not of the administrator. In the first place I would ask, why does a school exist? Is it in order to provide employment for the administrator and the teachers? (No.) A school exists to serve the educational needs and interests of a given community. These needs, therefore, ought to be identified by and for the community in terms of a representative board. The principal's role as educational leader is to help the board to identify policy needs, to bring to light policy elements, formulate and select policies, to monitor programs which are the implementations of policy, and to evaluate programs and program outcomes in terms of the policies, the objectives and ultimately the goals which it has established and/or recognized. This dual role on the part of the principal, servicing the board with reports and policy recommendations, and serving the board by administering the school - calls for a very sophisticated kind of educational leadership, much more sophisticated than the traditionally autonomous administrative position.

To understand the principal's role in relationship to the board it is necessary to understand what the board does. Every board of education, properly conceived, has four kinds of responsibility:

1. "To establish the objectives of the schools".
2. "To select or determine policies which guide the administrative staff in working toward those established objectives".
3. "To review the decisions which have been made by the administrative staff to carry out the board's policies".
4. "To evaluate the effect of the board's policy decisions in achieving the board's objectives".¹

¹How to Plan For and Conduct Your School Board Meetings by

Daniel R. Davies and Henry M. Brickell, (Croft Education Services, 100 Garfield Avenue, New London, Conn.)

Concerning the first function, namely, the establishment of the objectives of the schools, may I say that in this age of institutional change and challenge, goal setting is hardly a routine activity.*

This is especially true in the field of education which of necessity is involved in many institutions and, therefore, in much institutional change. Schools everywhere are being questioned not only regarding how they carry on the educational process but why they do, and what they seek to accomplish. A society which is uncertain of its own values must of necessity be uncertain concerning that institution which seeks to transmit those values. This is the situation in which every school board today finds itself, faced as it is with questions of: What should we teach? How much should we teach? Whom should we teach? and How much money we can afford to devote to education?

These questions must be recognized and faced at all levels, in the parish, in broader areas of service which may include a cluster of many parishes, in the diocese, and in the larger communities of state, nation and world. There ought to exist at every level appropriate board structures, truly representative of the communities which they serve, and properly subordinated one to another so that the educational philosophy of the

*Definitions: 1) goal 2) objective

Goal A goal is a relatively ultimate concept. It is usually philosophically expressed, or is a part of one's philosophy of action.

An Objective is an intermediate goal which if achieved represents progress toward the ultimate goal. An objective is a finite, achievable end which in turn is a means to a goal or a condition necessary if a goal is to be realized.

Christian community can evolve and be coordinantly articulated in terms of a true consensus and the common good. If our educational goal is Christian formation, we need to decide what we mean and what we want by way of such formation. To illustrate this concept let us assume that one of the characteristics of a well formed Christian is that he or she be a committed and effective witness to Christian values. This then would be one of the goals of the educational eterprise, a committed and effective Christian witness.

Let us suppose further that one of the values to which the board wants to give witness is a Christian understanding attitude and behavior regarding race. We want each child in a given educational setting to develop the cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral qualities which characterize a Christian view of race. These then constitute an aducation objective or cluster of objectives. They are, presumably, educationally achievable and measureable for if they are not educationally achieveable and measureable they cannot rightly serve as educational objectives.

But educational objectives alone are not enough. One must have educational policies as well, guide-lines for the educational administrator who in terms of his or her professional judgment and administrative discretion must design and implement an educational program which will enable the school to achieve its objectives.

What policies will enable a given school to achieve the objective of a Christian understanding/attitude and behavior regarding race. Here the board must patiently, prudently, and pragmatically study the policy needs, (identified as a rule by the administrator) consider the policy elements, and adopt policy formulations which give reasonable promise of enabling the school to achieve its educational objectives.

Let us return to our example, a Christian view of race. There are many conceivable policies which a board might adopt regarding the objectives of inculcating a Christian understanding, attitude, and behavior regarding race. Policies regarding curriculum, text book selection, teacher hiring, student admission, etc. Let us suppose that the

board decides, among other things, to adopt a student admission policy which will diminish or even eliminate de facto segregation and thus will provide a better racial mix in the school population, the argument being that a child needs more than a theoretical educational experience if her or she is to acquire a Christian view of race. Such a policy could have a far reaching effect properly implemented. How effectively it will be implemented will depend largely on the imagination and ingenuity of the administrator, the courage and wisdom of the board, and the support of the community served. The implementation of the above policy may call for the development of a number of sub-policies which enable the administrator to try some new approaches leading to the establishment of a racially integrated, educationally effective faith community.

A policy, as Davies and Brickell have stated, is "a guide to discretionary action." Every policy represents an expression of board intent regarding some aspect of school organization or operation. It is a legitimate kind of responsibility for the board to have because it relates to the objectives of the school and the capacity of the community to provide an educational program appropriate to the attainment of these objectives.

All policies are based on the policy elements which the board, in the course of its analysis of any given problem, real or anticipated, identifies. Policy elements are in effect the value judgements and concerns which the board expresses, more or less informally, whenever it is asked to look at a problem and to define or select a policy which will guide the administrator in dealing with that problem or similar problems yet to arise.

3. The Administrator as executive officer of the board.

The key figure in any successful board meeting is the administrator or executive officer, the superintendent, if a system of schools is involved, the principal if only

one school. The administrator should come to each meeting prepared to answer three questions:

- 1) What are we going to talk about tonight? (What problem(s) do we have that require policy action?)
- 2) What do you want us to do? (What policy do you recommend)
- 3) Why do you recommend this course of action? (What evidence do you have to support your recommendation?)

It is the superintendent (or principal) as executive officer of the board who recommends a policy. He does not make it. He informs the Board, he advises the Board, but he does not, and should not, control the Board. He exercises educational leadership strictly in terms of his professional competence. Any problem which he presents to the board represents an area of administrative concern for which no policy, or at least no adequate policy, yet exists. If a policy already exists there would be no need to go to the board except perhaps to give the board an opportunity to review the administrative decision post factum. Which brings us to the third function of the board, namely, monitoring the decisions which have been made by the administrative staff to carry out the board's policies.

4. The board as monitor

This function of the board should not be construed as interference in the administrative sphere. The board's activity is simply that of monitoring the school's operation as reflected in administrative decisions. Regular reporting of such administrative actions, especially those of an unusual or possibly controversial nature, is a means of reassuring the board concerning administrative decisions and a means of reassuring the administrator regarding board support and confidence in him.

5. The board as evaluator

The fourth basic function of the board is to evaluate. The board's work is quite incomplete unless it asks itself periodically: Are the policies which we have made, is the program which we have authorized, producing the results which we envisioned? How effective is the educational process which we have provided? How satisfactory is the product? Here it is quite proper for the board to request evidence of success and failure, of strength and weakness, not in order to place blame but in order to make an honest appraisal. Education today generally suffers from a credibility gap. To close this gap between society and the institutions which serve it is perhaps the greatest social need of our times, a need which can (best) be met in terms of the (invaluable) "loop concept" developed by Davies and Brickell. (See Appendix #1)

First there are objectives. Every school system has them. They are subscribed to, and ideally, articulated by the board. They represent presumably what parents want for their children. Then come policies, likewise, the product of board action.

The administrative staff makes regulations, specifying how policies apply in the school situation. Rules lead to action. They translate board policy into educational programs.

But we cannot stop here. The board needs to know how effective the educational programs are. The board needs reports on the educational process. It needs to know that teachers are qualified, instructional materials are adequate, class size is reasonable, etc. These reports, however, do not tell anyone whether the system is meeting its objectives. The second kind of report has to be concerned with product. Scores on standardized achievement tests, data on the dropout rate, facts on job

placement after graduation, evidence of religious understanding, etc.--these represent a measure of effectiveness of the school's program.

Davies and Brickell contend that laymen can "monitor the performance of a professional staff given three conditions":

- 1) that the board starts with a clear statement of objectives understandable to laymen.
- 2) That the board adopts and maintains a written set of policies designed to set the condition most likely to achieve the goals.
- 3) That the board insists on a good set of both process and product reports. The latter are especially important because they enable the board to close the loop by comparing results with the stated objectives.²

This approach to educational management gives the Board the "control" it needs, the Administrator the "authority" he or she needs.

In stressing the board's prerogatives, on the one hand, and the leadership role of the school administrator, on the other, it may appear that I have created a situation of inconsistent if not impossible expectations. How can one lead if he is consigned to a position of dependence and subordination?

I would prefer to see in this situation a paradox rather than an inconsistency, a more profound indication of the nature of educational leadership. The school

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Daniel R. Davies, James R. Deneen, New Patterns for Catholic Education, (Croft Educational Services, New London, Conn.), 1968, P. 112.

administrator in relation to the board must be a leader in terms of policy development, a follower in terms of policy execution. This dual role is not without its tensions and occasional misunderstandings, but it is a role which, if well played, will be the most effective educationally and the most satisfying professionally.

Board members, too, must experience satisfaction. And this they can do if every participant in a board meeting plays his proper role properly. The administrator's (principal's) role has been delineated already. An other key person whose function is no less important, is the board chairman, for it is his responsibility to facilitate, coordinate and regulate board discussion enabling it to become productive. The board should be able to experience the satisfaction at every meeting either that previous policy determinations are in fact working, i.e. that the school program is being administered satisfactorily, or, more typically, that the problems related to school operation having been identified and reported by the administrator are indeed manageable in terms of policies which they adopt.

Throughout this talk I have used the terms principal and administrator interchangeably. But no principal should be satisfied with being a mere administrator, nor should a board be content with the services of a mere administrator. What every principal wants to be and what every board should want to be served by is an educational leader.

An educational leader, as opposed to a mere administrator, has the following characteristics:

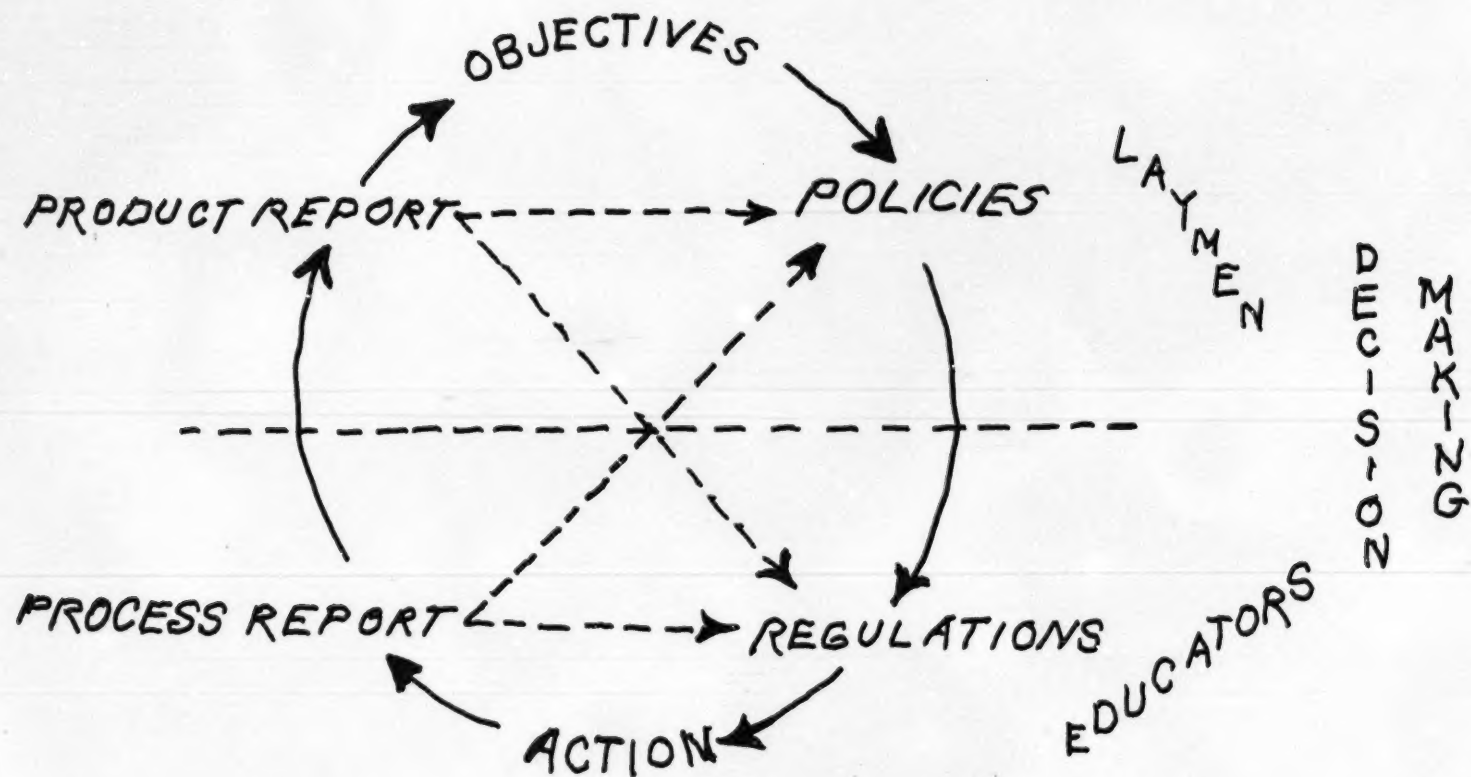
- 1) An educational leader makes educational decisions in terms of principle rather than in terms of political or personal expedience.
- 2) An educational leader prefers that such principles be shared with significant others - with staff, with children, with parents, but most importantly with

that group which is representative of all the above and which has the responsibility and competence to translate principles into educational policy. We call it a board of education.

- 3) An educational leader understands the concept of a board of education and supports its development, an educational leader helps the board always, together with the community it represents and serves, to become more effective in translating the Gospel message and ideal into educational programs.

We all know that the great need in the Catholic educational community is the development of mature Christians. One of the best means at hand for achieving this goal, one of the best forms of adult education we can have in any community is that which takes place in the process of sharing responsibility for educational decision making with a board of education and with the community it serves.

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THE DAVIES-BRICKELL LOOP

APPENDIX #1